

## BOOK REVIEW

**Soja Maria, *Kuriakose Elias Chavara and the Educational Renaissance*, (Theological Studies on Saint Chavara 12), Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2023, Pages 269, ISBN978-93-92996-47-4.**

Soja Maria presents the educational philosophy of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, which comprises ethics, inclusivity, and gender equality, in her book *Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Education Renaissance*. Chavara's work in media, family, and the marginalised also finds a place in this book. Soja Maria is a Professor of Education at the St Joseph's College of Teacher Education for Women, Ernakulam, India. She dedicates the book to the numerous educators, students, and individuals whose lives have been touched and transformed by Chavara's educational contributions.

The book is the 12th in the Theological Studies Series on Saint Chavara. Some of the other books in this series are on spirituality, sanctity and social responsibility. The book is very relevant due to the seminal contributions of the CMI-CMC congregations in educating the Kerala society. The book is a unique attempt on two counts. At first, it places Chavara among the great Christian educators. Secondly, the saint's role as a renaissance educator of the nineteenth century in Kerala is proven. Thus, this book makes a global appeal to appreciate the life and works of Kuriakose Elias Chavara.

Education is a unique mission of the Church. Globally, the role of the Church in education has been well accepted. Most famous educational institutions in Europe and the United States are born from an ecclesial context, for public or clerical education. When the Sanskrit school in Mannanam was started in 1846, Chavara insisted on a mix of seminarians and laypeople attending it. By this, Chavara used education to fight untouchability and casteism. This is articulated in the chapter, "Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara's contributions to education for the marginalized."

This book consists of fifteen chapters. The themes of the chapters are structured to suit the numerous subtopics where education has a

significant role in transforming people and society. About two hundred years ago, saint Chavara could envision one of the most important sustainable development goals as access to education. Universal education is the major stress in chapter six. Chapters are structured in such a manner that they span almost every aspect of human development.

One of the understandings of renaissance is “a revival of or renewed interest in something.” Chavara’s works were not technically a revival of or renewed interest in education.” However, in the introductory chapter, a brief history of education up to the pre-British period is given. The author also presented education as the tool for the Renaissance. Even in the European context, only in the Italian context can the word ‘renaissance’ be properly used. However, from an evaluative understanding, especially in the background of the rich Indian heritage of the ancient education system, the author tries to justify Chavara’s contribution to education as a renaissance work. In addition to it, Chavara is compared to many of the personalities of the educational ‘renaissance’ in India during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The book carries a rich bibliography and a list of 40 experts in Chavara studies and education. Hence, this book is very useful for fact-finding and further research.

**Joseph Varghese Kureethara CMI**  
(Email: frjoseph@christuniversity.in)  
St Joseph’s Monastery, Mannanam